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THE U.S. COAST GUARD

A Flexible Force for National Security

Vice Admiral Vivien Crea, U.S. Coast Guard

The U.S. Coast Guard is a flexible and effective force for national security in an era when the demands for adaptive and agile capabilities have increased dramatically. The growing awareness of the need for heightened international maritime security, the challenges of the Global War on Terrorism, the growth and reshaping of maritime trade, other security trends and dynamics, and expanded humanitarian-response needs have all but ensured the emergence of the Coast Guard—the smallest of the five U.S. armed forces—as a vital force for America’s twenty-first-century security and safety, as well as for safeguarding good order throughout the maritime domain.

The Coast Guard has always played key roles in the protection of the U.S. homeland and has been entrusted with five fundamental missions: Maritime Security, National Defense, Maritime Safety, Protection of Natural Resources, and Maritime Mobility. While all are inextricably linked to the good order of the U.S. and global maritime domains, the Maritime Security and National Defense missions in particular represent our service’s direct contribution to the National Strategy for Maritime Security approved by President Bush in 2005. Our maritime security goals include reducing America’s vulnerability to terrorism by preventing waterborne terrorist attacks; securing maritime borders by halting the flow of illegal aliens and contraband; preventing violations of our exclusive economic zone; and suppressing maritime violations of federal law. The Coast Guard’s National Defense goals include defending the nation and enhancing regional stability in support of the National Security Strategy and National Military Strategy through our unique, relevant, and nonredundant capabilities and authorities.

In partnership with the U.S. Navy, we are committed to the National Fleet initiative to foster seamless compatibility across America's maritime and naval defense systems while avoiding mission requirement gaps as well as redundancies. Increasingly, our National Fleet contributions link us to the combatant commanders, as well as other U.S. joint and coalition forces.

Central to our ongoing and future contributions to the National Fleet is the DEEPWATER acquisition program, which is modernizing and equipping the Coast Guard for the threats and hazards of the future.

SHIFTING DEMANDS

Three core demands drive the requirement to reshape the Coast Guard and to augment our ability to be a central force for flexible response to provide for national security.

The first is associated with the post-9/11 environment. The protection of the homeland in response to asymmetric attacks on U.S. territory has become a core strategic challenge. To respond to this challenge, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was created, a new unified Northern Command (NORTHCOM) was created, and the Coast Guard was shifted from the Department of Transportation to the DHS. The service has become a key catalyst in providing capabilities to accomplish DHS and NORTHCOM missions.

The 9/11 attacks caused a tremendous shift in our missions and tasks balance. Resources committed to port security spiked from 2 percent of the service total on 10 September to 60 percent within a matter of days, and there they remained for months. Since then, homeland security operations have leveled off to a sustainable 28 percent, but that change in emphasis is permanent—the “new normalcy,” as former Coast Guard Commandant Admiral James M. Loy characterized it. The law that created the Department of Homeland Security and transferred the Coast Guard there in 2003 directed the service to maintain all former missions while taking on the formidable task of securing 361 U.S. ports and more than ninety-five thousand miles of coastline.

The need to protect the homeland in the context of the “long war” against terrorism has been a key force for change in the Coast Guard. Although our initial response to this new terrorism threat temporarily drained resources from other mission areas, we have worked to restore the maritime safety and security mission balance. Congress and the administration have provided critical funding support. New and more capable assets have been added, and all of our resources present a multimission capability that can instantly and flexibly surge from search and rescue, to restoration of our ports and waterways, to response to avert a threat to our homeland security. New intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) and command-and-control (C2) capabilities have enhanced our

ability to identify potential threats and to manage assets to respond to those threats.

Collaboration with federal, state, and local authorities has greatly expanded to improve security in our ports and coastal waterways. Strategic engagement with the Navy and NORTHCOM has been intensified. We are carefully designing and building a maritime regime that through regulation, international engagement, and collaboration with private industry and federal, state, and local partners seeks to push our borders off shore, to identify and mitigate threats before they reach our nation's ports and waterways. We also have refined processes, improved maritime domain awareness and information sharing, and developed stronger partnerships at federal, state, and local agency levels and also with industry and private organizations at home and overseas.

The second demand has been to recast the Coast Guard's role in trade security. Shipping is at the heart of global trade. Most international trade—about 90 percent of the total by volume—is carried by sea. About half of the world's trade by value and 90 percent of the general cargo is now transported in containers, a dramatic shift in the nature of the global supply chain fueling hyper-globalization. Supply chains that feed components and finished products to users on a just-in-time and just-enough basis have become critical to streamlining efficiencies in modern manufacturing and service industries. Seaborne trade and its land connections in the global supply chain have become increasingly efficient, large in scale, and open to exploitation.

The confluence of the increase in the volume of trade, the shift toward containerization, the shift in manufacturing and production models, and the rise of megaports has created a new and complex maritime security environment. The long-standing threat of piracy and also of terrorists with potential access to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and waterborne improvised explosive devices (WBIEDs), perhaps funded by illicit activities, elevates the importance of maritime security significantly.

The dramatic upsurge in global maritime trade is creating a new strategic environment within which the Coast Guard is leading the efforts to shape a more effective and enhanced maritime security regime or system. The creation of a maritime security regime is an enterprise that must blend the activities of and achieve a balance between the commercial, civilian, law enforcement, and quasi-military domains. The challenges of the twenty-first century uniquely position the Coast Guard as the nation's choice maritime security force due to our multimission, maritime, and military capabilities developed in more than 216 years of service, and to our unique synergies as a military service, law enforcement and regulatory authority, and member of the national intelligence community.

The third demand is the growing significance of the Coast Guard in international engagement. The Global War on Terrorism and maritime trade and security demands have placed the service in the vortex of a new international dynamic. Fighting the Global War on Terrorism means that our overseas engagement in places like Iraq and the Middle East has been enhanced, as well as our role with allies in the Pacific, Europe, the Caribbean, and Africa. Our unique skill sets of working with the commercial sector, our law-enforcement authorities, the manner in which we serve as a model for overseas navies concerned with coastal defense, and our seamless transition to a military role with the Navy and other joint and international forces are of increasing significance.

For example, law-enforcement agencies in the northeastern United States and Canada are working more closely together to share terrorist-related intelligence and information. The idea of a regional approach to homeland security is one that is very important.

Moreover, our role in Iraq has been to provide capabilities that capitalize on our special competencies for operating in the littorals—particularly patrol boats and small craft designed to operate in riverine and brown-water regions. Working with the Navy, the Coast Guard offers extensive experience gained from boarding vessels to stop drug smugglers, illegal migrants, and other illicit activities, and our understanding of the littoral operational environment is second to none.

At the peak of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) in 2003, the Coast Guard had 1,250 personnel deployed, including about five hundred reservists. We continue to operate six Island-class 110-foot patrol boats in the Arabian Gulf and also deploy two law-enforcement detachments (LEDETs) on board U.S. Navy and coalition ships. The patrol boats perform a variety of important missions, including offshore oil platform protection, maritime-interdiction and shipping escort missions, and port-security assets for deployed forces. We also continue to play a critical role in training Iraqi navy and marine forces to facilitate mission transition.

Another example of Coast Guard operations conducted in non-U.S. waters is to patrol and protect major trade chokepoints, through which much of the world's commerce passes. Many foreign navies and coast guards work in closer cooperation with the U.S. Coast Guard than with the U.S. Navy, which has the primary responsibility for naval force projection and sea-lane security. Since the 1990s, Coast Guard cutters have deployed with Navy battle, strike, and expeditionary groups in order to build relationships and train with smaller navies, as host nations are often more willing to allow a white-hulled cutter into port than a haze-gray U.S. warship—as evidenced by the visit of a Coast Guard high-endurance cutter and buoy tender to China in summer 2006, as well as

operations by medium-endurance cutters in the Gulf of Guinea and the Mediterranean in support of U.S. European Command.

Still another example was the Coast Guard's participation in CHOKEPOINT '04, a multinational exercise designed to test the ability of allied countries to share intelligence information, track, and take down a vessel suspected of carrying material used to make weapons of mass destruction. The U.S. exercise partners included Australia, Canada, Chile, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Norway, the Netherlands, Panama, Poland, Portugal, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. CHOKEPOINT '04 was part of the Proliferation Security Initiative announced by the president in May 2003, which stemmed from the National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction issued in December 2002.

Finally, building these relationships and providing training for partner nations' maritime security forces is an important international engagement role carried out by the Coast Guard International Training Division at Training Center Yorktown, Virginia. For example, we sent boarding officers to Brazil to help train its Federal Maritime Police force. The Brazilians were so pleased with the training that they have requested more advanced training from the division.

FLEXIBLE AND ADAPTABLE CAPABILITY

The Coast Guard is a flexible and adaptable force. We are always deployed and always active in safeguarding the maritime security of U.S. citizens and interests. As such, we are a unique military force. Other military services train and deploy or wait for surge requirements to emerge. For the Coast Guard, "24/7" is the reality of operational tempo and demands. "Deployment" is not a phase of the development of the force; it is an everyday activity.

In a sense, the Coast Guard is a "Rubik's Cube" in the "puzzle" of national security. It can combine and recombine to work with its various domestic and foreign partners to shape effective responses to twenty-first-century security demands.

Our evolving relationship with the U.S. Navy underscores the Coast Guard's recombination power. In March 2006, the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Michael G. Mullen, and then-Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Thomas H. Collins signed an updated and expanded Navy-Coast Guard National Fleet Policy. The National Fleet Policy calls for a fleet with three major qualities. First, the fleet will comprise ships, boats, aircraft, and shore command-and-control nodes that are affordable, adaptable, and interoperable and possess complementary capabilities while eliminating redundancy. Second, these forces will be designed with common command, control, and communications equipment and operational, weapon, and engineering systems, and they will

include coordinated operational planning, procurement, training, and logistics. Finally, the National Fleet will have the capabilities needed to support the full range of U.S. national security requirements, from overseas power projection to homeland defense and security. Admiral Thad W. Allen, who became Coast Guard commandant in May 2006, and Admiral Mullen underscored the services' joint commitment to the National Fleet concept in an article published in the August 2006 U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*.

The Coast Guard will contribute statutory authorities; multimission cutters, boats, and aircraft; and command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR) systems—augmented by law enforcement and environmental-response teams. This takes advantage of the whole array of Coast Guard mission capabilities for maritime security operations, counterterrorism and crisis response, and meeting the joint combatant commanders' theater plans for general-purpose warships.

One of our most successful examples of this Navy–Coast Guard partnership is the Joint Harbor Operations Center (JHOC). The JHOC is manned by both Coast Guard and Navy personnel, and it takes advantage of both services' strengths to identify and track all maritime traffic in and out of U.S. ports. The JHOC in Hampton Roads, Virginia, for example, has already proven its effectiveness by identifying and intercepting unresponsive radar contacts, keeping our ports and harbors more secure from unknown vessels and the threats they may pose.

Another aspect of our operational flexibility and agility is our ability to provide leadership in emergency circumstances. The dramatic challenges posed by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in the late summer of 2005 provided a test for the Coast Guard to provide new emergency-response and military/civilian coordinating capabilities for the nation. The Coast Guard provided search and rescue, command capabilities, and communications connectivity between the local area and national authorities, and demonstrated the ability to operate closely with elements of the other armed forces and regional, state, and local first-responders. Coast Guard cutters, boats, and aircraft—superbly assisted by the Coast Guard Auxiliary and Coast Guard Reserve—saved more than 33,500 lives and MEDEVACed nearly ten thousand people. This was an absolutely phenomenal response by dedicated Coast Guard men and women, many of whom lost their own homes in the catastrophic winds, storm surge, and flooding.

ENHANCED CAPABILITIES NEEDED

At the heart of providing enhanced capabilities for the Coast Guard is the Integrated Deepwater System (IDS) program—the largest in Coast Guard history. The IDS program aims to modernize virtually every element of the Coast Guard

operating forces. While new ship and aircraft procurement is under way, current platforms are receiving technology and equipment upgrades that are having an immediate impact on our operations. For example, cutters and helicopters equipped with the first flight of DEEPWATER command, control, and communications upgrades were used in dealing with the aftermath of Katrina and Rita. These same DEEPWATER upgrades are helping us to track and interdict more effectively drug smugglers with our aging fleet (which is being called on to stretch farther each year), as evidenced by drug seizures continuing to reach record-high levels.

It is important to realize, however, that DEEPWATER is network centric, not platform based. Commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) and Navy-compliant C4ISR systems that network our assets together to increase dramatically maritime domain awareness are at the heart of the IDS “system of systems.” For example, I was privileged to inaugurate the establishment of a new Coast Guard Communication Area Master Station Atlantic (CAMSLANT) center in spring 2006. The center provides additional capacity to build out new C4ISR capabilities under the DEEPWATER program and to provide better communications among airborne assets, assets afloat, and shore command and control—both clear and classified systems and better access to centralized databases and programs in support of our missions.

Times have changed from the days when our only expectations were for the very limited communications allowed by small, radio-centric data “pipes”—satellite networks now allow everything from underway Internet access to personal e-mail—but connectivity and bandwidth gaps are still challenges. The DEEPWATER project promises to improve that access and connectivity, linking our mission-essential systems to tactical units in ways we could not have imagined a few years ago. The new CAMSLANT facility, matched by a similar facility on the West Coast for the Pacific region, will be a communications hub about which the Coast Guard operates.

We do, however, face significant challenges in this broad-spectrum modernization and recapitalization of our aging inventory of cutters, aircraft, and supporting systems. Indeed, we are sustaining a fleet approaching block obsolescence at the same time as we plan for its replacement with converted or new assets—all the while carrying out a significantly expanded mission set at record operational tempos. We are beginning to see results.

SHAPING OUR FUTURE

To address these challenges and more, Admiral Allen has set a new course to ensure that we can more effectively meet twenty-first-century demands. This

reform effort has focused initially upon a new approach to acquisition, logistics, and operations.

First, he has set in motion a process to create a single acquisition system in the Coast Guard by consolidating the DEEPWATER acquisition's Program Executive Office (PEO) with the Directorate of Acquisition. With the consolidation of the Acquisition Directorate and the IDS PEO, the Coast Guard can develop an integrated doctrine for acquisition, strengthen our acquisition core, and garner enterprise-wide efficiencies.

Second, a reform of the logistics process will be facilitated by the emergence of a single acquisition system. The goal is to create a more responsive and responsible logistics organization designed to support operational mission effectiveness at the lowest achievable costs. The desired outcome is to craft acquisition and business processes designed to ensure mission effectiveness while minimizing total ownership costs.

Third, a new approach to organizing and deploying Coast Guard assets is envisaged, centered on creating a Deployable Operations Group. By grouping specialized operational capabilities into tailored deployable force packages under a unified chain of command, we will optimize the employment of these forces for maritime disaster and threat responses. More importantly, we will be better able to integrate these Coast Guard forces with other DHS and federal and state capabilities, such as customs and border protection and immigration and customs enforcement, law enforcement, urban search and rescue teams, disaster medical assistance teams, and Department of Defense forces.

Finally, reform of our acquisition process is crucial to ensuring that the "24/7" Coast Guard is ever more responsive to twenty-first-century challenges, threats, and hazards. Our goal is to meet our responsibilities at even greater efficiencies and effectiveness, guaranteeing that we will be able to deploy our "shield of freedom" forces wherever and whenever needed.

We must have modern, fast, reliable aircraft, cutters, and boats, networked within a C4ISR system that links civilian and military organizations and forces. We need properly equipped people with the right safety and protective equipment for them to carry out their missions, and the right sensors and information for them to do their jobs effectively. We have absolutely incredible people in the Coast Guard who do the very best jobs that they can. We need to support them fully with new resources and a restructured Coast Guard if we are to meet our responsibilities to the American people more effectively.

In short, as the Coast Guard shapes its future, it has become a service central to the security of the American people here and abroad. It is a key link within the DHS in integrated planning and execution of key homeland security roles, missions, and tasks. In the context of the Global War on Terrorism, extended

homeland security is required. To contribute to extended homeland security, our overseas commitments and operations have been augmented. And with the upsurge in maritime trade, our ability to work with trading nations and commercial sectors worldwide is being strengthened.

Indeed, much remains to be done. With greater challenges come greater responsibilities. America's Coast Guard is ready to shoulder those responsibilities—*Semper Paratus!*

